

# NONPROFIT NEWS

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Letter from Nonoko Sato, executive director

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## Yes, advocacy is mission critical

Before I came to MCN, I ran a growing, but small, nonprofit focused on college access and educational equity for low-income students in San Francisco. Throughout my 13 years with that organization in various roles, I developed expertise and deeper understanding of the challenges low-income students and families face in accessing what should be a fundamental right to quality education.

As experts in this area, this nonprofit knew first hand how existing systems were fundamentally flawed and how wealthier and resourced families were able to take advantage of various loopholes, networks, and opportunities; while low-income families who predominately identified as people of color, immigrants, and refugees, single-parents, and/or home/food/resource insecure people continue to struggle and be left behind.

As an organization, we struggled to find capacity to “do more” and primarily focused on supporting people navigating existing broken systems. Despite our expertise, relationships, and community trust, we didn’t advocate or participate in public policy related to systemic changes necessary for long-term change we knew our students needed.

### **Until I worked at MCN, I didn’t know that 501(c)(3) organizations could do advocacy work.**

[Do you know how nonpartisan nonprofit activities are protected? An important tax code called the Johnson Amendment protects nonprofit integrity and allows the sector to look beyond partisanship towards collective and collaborative problem solving.]

I was already overwhelmed with day-to-day responsibilities in meeting the high expectations from donors to grow and serve more families, address urgent issues that felt constant, and to retain staff in an unaffordable area. I didn’t have capacity to even question when I was once told the misconception that nonprofits are forbidden from doing any advocacy work.

[A timely report by the Independent Sector marks an alarming trend in nonprofit lobbying and public policy work.](#) It reflects my own personal experience – advocacy feels beyond mission critical and nonprofits lack understanding (and resources) on permissible lobbying activities.

Only 31 percent of nonprofits reported engaging in advocacy or lobbying over the last five years, compared to 74 percent in 2000. The report also showed that only 32 percent of nonprofits were aware of the advocacy activities they can legally do, a decline from over half twenty years ago.

**This is alarming because nonprofits are an essential part of the ecosystem with government that meets the needs of communities. Our insights, networks, and proven trust uniquely position nonprofits for success in advocacy and public policy. We are the subject matter experts.**

We bring a wide range of expertise and experiences to meaningfully contribute to big picture conversations about addressing root causes. And many organizations have roots in historically marginalized communities and can ensure their voices and needs are heard.

This collective power was seen across Minnesota’s last legislative session, with many policy wins backed by active nonprofit and community coalitions.

New policies passed — including Paid Family and Medical Leave ([page 8](#)), Renter’s Credit ([page 12](#)), expanded voting rights ([page 11](#)), critical investments to streamline grantmaking systems ([page 5](#)), and more — move all Minnesota communities toward a more equitable future.

**In this special legislative issue of *Nonprofit News*, where we celebrate the collective work of nonprofit advocates and policy nerds, my call to action is this – ensure public policy is a part of your workplan.**

Learn what you can and cannot do as a nonpartisan nonprofit ([don’t miss ‘Nonpartisan most asked questions’ on page 6](#)). Encourage your community to vote and hold elected officials accountable. Join various coalitions, as there is always strength in the collective. If you have power and resources, invest and fund policy work within nonprofits.

And remember - advocacy work IS mission critical. Your ability to operate and deliver your mission depends on it.

In community,  
Nonoko

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## 2023 Session Impact: Nonprofit sector wins

by Marie Ellis, public policy director

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It's no wonder that I had goosebumps for an hour at a meeting of nonprofit public policy advocates as they shared their advocacy highlights from the 2023 legislative session.

Truly powerful. We heard about positive changes in housing, climate, health care coverage, caretaker reimbursement rates, child care, child protection, shelter and housing for youth, workforce training, and early learning, to name just a few.

I started to make a list on Post-It Note, and ended up needing five Post-Its with teeny writing to capture everything.

**Because of your advocacy this session, more home-bound elders will have access to nutritious meals, workers won't have to choose between losing a paycheck or caring for a new child, people with felony convictions will have their voice heard at the ballot box, there will be ongoing dedicated funding for transit, PFAs ("forever chemicals") will be banned, low-income tax filers will see a more equitable tax system, and child poverty in Minnesota will be reduced by 30 percent.**

This is a small sample of nonprofits' legislative accomplishments.

Most of these legislative wins were the result of years, sometimes decades, of work by dedicated nonprofit staff. Some were achieved with partners from outside the nonprofit sector, but most were led by our sector.

**If your vision of nonprofit work does not include public policy advocacy, consider that these wins would not have been possible without resources dedicated to advocacy at nonprofit organizations. We are a powerful force.**

We are proud to report that MCN's advocacy on behalf of the nonprofit sector and our nonprofit members also saw some major successes.

First, let's look at changes to the ways the state manages grants to nonprofits. A February 2023 report by the Office of the Legislative Auditor, "[Oversight of State-Funded Grants to Nonprofit Organizations](#)," confirmed what MCN hears from you, our nonprofit members: grants management staff at granting state agencies do not have the tools necessary to

conduct appropriate oversight.

**In response, MCN advocated for legislation that would allow the state to successfully and equitably oversee its grants to nonprofits. We achieved these wins, with bipartisan support:**

- A very significant increase in the state's internal capacity for grants management. The state's Office of Grants Management is currently a one FTE office, and under the new legislation it will be a seven FTE office. Three of those positions will focus specifically on equity in grants management.
- Funding to determine the feasibility of a grants management platform that all 27 granting state agencies would use. Currently, only 13 agencies have such a technology platform, and each one is different. A unified system will reduce barriers for nonprofits in applying for state funding, relieve some administrative burdens from state agency grantmaking staff, and provide data on state grants to nonprofits that is currently unobtainable.

Another big topic this legislative session was the state's financial oversight of state grants to nonprofits.

In April, both the House and Senate introduced [language to increase financial oversight on the state's grants to nonprofits](#). The versions had substantial differences, and some of the provisions were very problematic.

**MCN was able to successfully work with legislators, state agencies, and partners to create new language that would meet the state's goal of increasing financial review of potential grantees, while making it efficient for state agencies to administer, and reasonable for potential grantees to manage.**

In the wake of the Feeding Our Future scandal, MCN expected to see proposals related to the ways the state provides oversight of grant dollars to nonprofits, and we prepared before and during session to advocate for appropriate and workable changes.

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*[This article continues on page 14.](#)*

Guest column by Nonprofit VOTE

## Staying nonpartisan most asked questions

### Can my nonprofit participate in advocacy?

Yes! The IRS affirmatively states that 501(c)(3) organizations may conduct voter engagement or connect with candidates on a nonpartisan basis. The main principle of being nonpartisan is to not conduct voter engagement and education in a way intended to support or oppose a specific candidate.

### What is ok for nonprofit staff to talk about?

Staff working for 501(c)(3) organizations should also be nonpartisan when representing their nonprofit on site, at events, or doing voter engagement activities. Staff cannot suggest which candidate to vote for or political party to support.

You can provide information about the voting process, such as dates and deadlines, early voting hours, getting a mail ballot, or helping register to vote. You can let people know about a candidate forum or debate.

### What if someone asks who the nonprofit supports or who they should vote for?

Remind them that as a nonprofit you must remain nonpartisan. You can:

- Encourage them to talk to a friend or family member they trust and share values with.
- Direct them to a sample ballot or nonpartisan voter guide, if available.
- Share the Minnesota Secretary of State’s resource – [What’s on my ballot?](#)

### What if my nonprofit is asked about a ballot measure?

Ballot measures are about laws not candidates. You may discuss the pros and cons of a ballot measure, unless it is your organization’s policy not to.

### Can staff support candidates in their personal time?

Yes. Staff may support candidates when not “on the clock” working for your nonprofit.

### Can my nonprofit use social media to promote voting?

Social media is an important tool to communicate with supporters and the public, mobilize public opinion, and promote civic engagement. The law requiring nonprofits to remain nonpartisan is the same for social media. Nonprofits may encourage people to register and vote, but you may not use social media to indicate support for, or opposition to, candidates.

### Is my nonprofit responsible for how our social media posts are shared?

No. You are not responsible for how and with whom others share your posts.

### Can staff use their personal social media accounts to support candidates?

Individuals have a right to express preferences for or against candidates. This applies to staff personal social media accounts. The exception would be if that account is primarily used by the individual or others as a communication vehicle for the nonprofit.

### What about the executive director or CEO?

The chief executive officer of the nonprofit has the same rights of free expression as any other staff member, when not officially representing the organization. However, to the extent they are seen by stakeholders and constituents as representing the nonprofit, a CEO should exercise more restraint in what they say on the internet to avoid any appearance of partisanship.

#### PERMISSIBLE ELECTION ACTIVITIES CHECKLIST

##### 501(c)(3) organizations may:

- ✓ Conduct or promote voter registration.
- ✓ Encourage people to vote.
- ✓ Continue issue advocacy during an Election.
- ✓ Educate voters on the voting process.
- ✓ Distribute sample ballots or nonpartisan voter guides.
- ✓ Host a candidate forum.
- ✓ Create a candidate questionnaire.
- ✓ Support, oppose, or host a community conversation on a Ballot Measure. Unlike candidates for office, nonprofits may take sides on a ballot measure.

##### To stay nonpartisan, 501(c)(3) organizations, or staff members speaking or acting on behalf of the nonprofit, may not:

- ✗ Endorse a candidate.
- ✗ Make a campaign contribution or expenditure for or against a candidate.
- ✗ Rate or rank candidates on who is most favorable to your issue(s).
- ✗ Let candidates use your facilities or resources, unless they are made equally available to all candidates.

## 2023 Session Impact: Health care, child care, racial equity

by Nan Madden, director, and Laura Mortenson, communications director, Minnesota Budget Project

Shrinking racial disparities in health coverage and economic well-being are among the expected outcomes from the 2023 Legislative Session. In pursuit of those goals, the Minnesota Budget Project has long advocated that all Minnesotans should have affordable health care and child care that meets their needs, with a focus on those with the greatest barriers, including Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities.

**This session, policymakers took advantage of large projected state budget surpluses, and built on years of community advocacy for equitable policy solutions, to pass seismic changes in many areas of state public policy and take aim at reducing Minnesota’s shameful racial disparities.**

[Sometimes referred to as the Minnesota Paradox](#), our state has some of the largest racial disparities in areas including housing and homeownership, health outcomes and health insurance, education, and incomes and wealth, while generally ranking high on those economic markers overall.

Historic and current public policies have kept BIPOC Minnesotans from gaining generational wealth by erecting roadblocks to things like buying homes or getting college degrees. Combined with decades of disinvestment in schools, transit, and economic growth in primarily BIPOC communities, too many of our neighbors of color are left out of our state’s prosperity in too many ways.

**The 2023 Legislative Session was an opportunity to enact policy solutions to contribute to dismantling some of these long-standing inequities.**

### **Investments in health care strengthens equity.**

Because of historic and current barriers to economic security, BIPOC Minnesotans are more likely to have lower incomes and work in jobs without health benefits, and as a result, 43 percent of the Minnesotans who get their affordable health care through Medicaid are people of color.

### **One step policymakers took this year to strengthen affordable health care coverage was enacting continuous Medicaid eligibility for children.**

Once young children qualify for Medicaid, they will stay eligible until they turn six years old, and older children under age 21 will remain eligible for at least 12 months. Continuous eligibility is especially important because protections in place during the pandemic have ended, and Minnesota is returning to a system in which people can lose their coverage due to monthly fluctuations in income. Continuous eligibility contributes to health care stability for those with fluctuating incomes – which is common among lower-wage workers.

### **Policymakers also strengthened MinnesotaCare, Minnesota’s premium-based affordable public health insurance option**

for people who earn too much to qualify for Medicaid, but don’t have affordable insurance through their employer, or are self-employed and can’t afford what’s available in the market. Over 100,000 Minnesotans get their health insurance through MinnesotaCare, and in 2021, an average of 31 percent were from BIPOC communities.

### **This year’s policy wins included expanding MinnesotaCare eligibility**

**to include about 40,000 undocumented Minnesotans** – a group of our neighbors who are 14 times more likely to be without health coverage than the state average. Policymakers also invested in design and planning for a MinnesotaCare “public option” through which an estimated 22,000 Minnesotans who currently “fall through the cracks” could buy in to MinnesotaCare coverage.

### **Affordable child care will benefit BIPOC children, families, and workers.**

Given the deep racial economic disparities in our state, Minnesotans of color are more likely to struggle to afford child care that nurtures children while parents go to work or school. That makes investing in affordable child care one component of providing an equitable start for all Minnesota kids.

### **This year’s steps forward include investing in Minnesota’s Child Care Assistance Program and Early Learning Scholarships so that more families can afford the care that meet their family’s needs.**

**Policymakers also increased reimbursement rates paid to child care providers and approved funding to recruit and retain child care workers and bring their compensation closer to a living wage.** Strengthening wages and security in these jobs are an important avenue to shrinking economic disparities in Minnesota, as BIPOC workers are over-represented in low-wage and entry-level child care jobs.

While significant steps were taken this session, nonprofits and policymakers must continue to advocate for equitable policies and budget decisions for Minnesota to truly become a place where all can thrive.

## 2023 Session Impact: Strengthening nonprofits as employers

by Ileana Mejia, public policy advocate

The 2023 Minnesota legislative session was an overall success for the nonprofit sector. MCN’s public policy team spent most of our time at the Capitol – attending committee hearings, meeting with lawmakers, and reviewing bills.

Seeing fellow nonprofit advocates in person was refreshing and brought a sense of community to the long hours, unexpected bill amendments, and last-minute committee hearing agendas.

Our 2023 policy agenda focused on issues that would position nonprofits as competitive employers, including The Minnesota Secure Choice Retirement Program, Paid Family and Medical Leave, and Pay History.

**The Minnesota Secure Choice Retirement Program** is for employers with five or more employees and who do not offer their own retirement plans. This program will allow employees at those organizations to start a retirement savings account. Employers must enroll eligible employees in the program and withhold payroll deduction contributions, unless the eligible employee has opted out of the program. Employers are not responsible for the administration, investment performance, plan design, or benefits paid to employees.

**Because Secure Choice will be much simpler to implement and administer than traditional employer retirement accounts, this will be an asset to small nonprofits and others that have been unable to provide retirement accounts for their employees.**

About half of small nonprofits with budgets under \$500,000 do not offer retirement saving plans, according to our *2022 Minnesota Nonprofit Salary & Benefits Survey*. Most nonprofits are small – about 60 percent of MCN’s member nonprofits have a budget under \$700,000.

**Paid Family and Medical Leave** is a social insurance program that will allow employees to take time off to care for themselves (medical leave) and their families (family leave), with leave capped at 20 weeks in a single year.

**PFML is paid for by a 0.7 percent payroll premium based on employee’s wages and will go into a state fund, much like the current Unemployment Insurance fund, ensuring a low-risk pool which keeps costs low. The program will begin January 1, 2026.**

The legislation includes job protection for employees, progressive wage replacement, and funds for outreach and education. The legislation also permits insurance carriers to offer paid family and medical leave insurance plans that can be purchased by employers in lieu of the state paid leave plan, if that private plan is equal to or better than the state’s plan.

The final bill also includes grants for small businesses and small business wage exclusion; these provisions currently apply only to for-profit entities, and we will be working to include nonprofits when inevitable adjustments are made to the bill in 2024.

[MCN has answers to nonprofits’ questions on our PFML webpage](#) –

check that out for details!

**Pay History** is an issue that MCN has supported over the last few years. Starting January 1, 2024, employers will be prohibited from asking applicants their pay history, which includes salaries, earnings, benefits, or any other compensation. This does not prevent an applicant from voluntarily disclosing pay history for the purposes of negotiating wages, salary, benefits, or other compensation.

**MCN has supported this legislation for the last few years and believes that it will help close wage disparities for women and people of color. We require employers to provide a salary when posting on our job board, as this helps our sector be a more transparent, trust-based, and equitable employment environment.**

Currently, there is a workforce shortage in the sector. Nonprofits are having difficulty hiring and retaining staff due to the financial climate and competition from government and private sectors.

We believe these policy wins are steps that maintain nonprofit strength and sustainability as viable and competitive employers. Providing living wages, offering strong benefits, and supporting staff is crucial for nonprofits to attract and retain talented professionals who work tirelessly to meet the rising demands of our communities.

As programs are implemented, we will do our best to relay information to nonprofits. [Subscribe to our Nonprofit Advocate e-newsletter to get the latest updates.](#)





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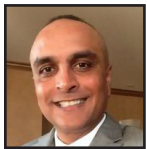


Dan's newest book is now available as softcover, or eBook, at Amazon. Also, for listening at Audible.com



**DanHegstad.com**

## Nonprofit news & advancements



The Saint Paul & Minnesota Foundation welcomed Ash Patel as director of IT and promoted Anne Hoyt Taff to vice president of partnerships.



Mary Bennett joined Washburn Center's leadership team as its new chief development officer.

The Neighbors Inc. board of directors announced Dawn Wambeke as its next executive director.



Catholic Charities Twin Cities announced the appointment of Mike Rios-Keating as its new director of culture and belonging.



Sara Jane Baldwin joined Gender Justice as senior staff attorney.

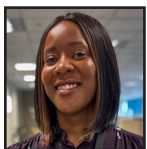


The Southeastern Minnesota Arts Council (SEMAC) announced their new executive director, Anastasia Shartin.

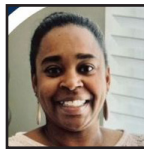


Land Bank Twin Cities appointed Thomas Streitz as interim executive director.

Achieve Twin Cities promoted five staff members, including Jeremiah Brown, vice president of partnerships and internships; Caitlyn Cole, director of career and college readiness; Kendra Engels, vice president of organizational strategy; Jennifer McGee, vice president of advancement; Megan Swoboda, vice president of finance and operations; and Emily Westerlund, director of monitoring and evaluation.



Elaina Simon joined The Minneapolis Foundation as executive office assistant.



Vail Place welcomed Quiana Thibodeaux as director of finance.



The Women's Foundation of Minnesota welcomed Alexa McIndoe as communications project manager.



Saint Paul Neighborhood Network announced Xavier Vazquez as its next executive director; Xavier sits on MCN's board of directors.

The Sexual Violence Center welcomed Jayson Cardwell as accountant and three new board members, Zhanar Khazhidinova of Project for Pride in Living, Katie Romey of ThinkSelf, and Lindsay Steward of The Paterson Foundation.

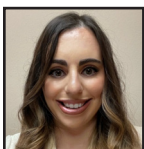


The Northland Foundation announced that Melissa King joined the organization as accountant and Michelle Ufford as director of grantmaking.



The Plains Art Museum announced the departure of Andrew Maus as director & CEO, with Mark Henze, chief financial officer, named as interim director.

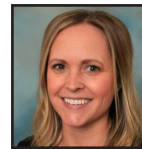
Kristen Denzen of Tierra Encantada has been named chair of the WomenVenture board of directors.



Legal Services of Northwest Minnesota welcomed Ramey Rudolph as legal secretary / intake specialist.

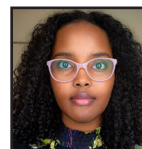


Eileen Maler retired after 15 years as program manager of the McKnight Endowment Fund for Neuroscience. McKnight colleague Joel Krogstad stepped into the role.



Lifeworks Services welcomed three members to their board of directors, Ed Kelly, healthcare executive, Danielle Kent of Prime Therapeutics, and Stephanie Lee of Global Street Partners.

The Northwest Area Foundation welcomed Chetna Tandon as director of people and culture.



Zuhur Samriye joined the University of Minnesota Law School as advancement operations associate.



Repowered, formerly Tech Dump and Tech Discounts, welcomed their new CEO, Heather Walch.

FamilyWise welcomed three new members to its board of directors, Cathy Perrizo of Creative Health Care Management, Jade Johnson of Hamm Clinic, and Michelle Jensen of Dakota County Children & Family Services.



The Great River Passage Conservancy announced Katie Nyberg as its next executive director.



Anne-Marie Hendrickson was named Tree Trust director of development.

### Help us celebrate nonprofit staff and board members!

MCN member organizations are invited to submit your organization's staff and board announcements to [Laura Dunford](#).

Please include their name, title, and photo if available. MCN cannot guarantee that all announcements will make it into *Nonprofit News*.

## 2023 Session Impact: Expanded voting rights in Minnesota

by Ileana Mejia, public policy advocate

2023 was a big year for election changes. As nonprofits, it is our role to advocate for better voting policies and increased access to the polls to eliminate barriers a person may face to voting. Though Minnesota already has one of the highest voter turnouts in the nation, barriers to voting remain for many.

**This legislative session, MCN successfully advocated with partners for legislation to expand voting rights, including automatic voter registration, preregistration of 16- and 17-year-olds, applications for ongoing absentee ballots, multilingual voting information, and voting protections from intimidation and interference.**

*(Note that all these changes are only for people who can legally vote in Minnesota.)* States who have pre-registration of 16-and-17-year-olds have seen their youth voting rates increase by up to 20 percent!

**Another democracy win was restoration of voter rights to individuals convicted of a felony.** This change will impact 50,000 Minnesotans and is the largest expansion of voting eligibility since the voting age was changed from 21 to 18 in 1971.

Most of the new election laws went into effect July 2023 and others will go into effect in 2024, such as automatic voter registration. [Minnesota's Secretary of State has more](#)

[information on all law changes on their website](#). Please share this information with your networks and communities so we can continue to be a state with the highest turnout in the nation.

Expanded voting rights also means voter engagement. As nonprofits, we can encourage our communities to register to vote, inform constituents about voting dates and deadlines, share what is on the ballot, and remind people to vote on Election Day.

Thanks to the McKnight Foundation and an anonymous foundation, [MCN granted \\$340,000 to 31 nonprofits across Minnesota to promote voter engagement in the 2022 midterm election](#).

- Grantees engaged over 682,000 people in-person and online.
- 96 percent of nonprofit grantees reported plans to conduct nonpartisan voter engagement beyond the 2022 election.
- Nonprofit grantees engaged every part of the state with: eight statewide, 16 metro-based, and seven Greater Minnesota-based organizations.

Thank you to all nonprofits who take the time to engage their community members about voting. MCN's public policy team looks forward to continuing our democracy work and encouraging nonprofit engagement.

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## 2023 Session Impact: Tax outcomes

by Nan Madden, director, Minnesota Budget Project

The tax bill Minnesota policymakers passed this year enacts policies to create a more equitable and inclusive tax system, fight child poverty, improve Minnesotans' economic well-being, and raise revenues to fund those policies and investments in public services after the state's short-term surplus bubble has ended.

MCN's Minnesota Budget Project contributed to those positive outcomes for Minnesotans, their families, and communities, through tax policy expertise, educating policymakers, engaging partners and the public, and supporting nonprofit and other organizational partners to bring their perspectives and voices into the policy debate.

**The centerpiece of the tax bill is the creation of a new [Minnesota Child Tax Credit \(CTC\)](#) for families with children ages 17 and under.**

It's estimated that nearly 300,000 households, including 513,000 children, will qualify for the CTC, which is up to \$1,750 per child. In addition, these families could also qualify for up to \$350 per family through the Working Family Tax Credit, depending on their earnings.

The income limit for qualifying families varies by family size; for example, a married couple with two children can qualify for a CTC until their income reaches \$67,000. Families with older children will continue to qualify for the Working Family Credit, which has been simplified and increased for the lowest-income families.

Income-boosting tax credits like the Child Tax Credit mean families have more resources to afford the basics and get their children off to a stronger start in life.

**These high-impact Child Tax Credit and related Working Family Credit changes could reduce child poverty in Minnesota by about one-third, [according to estimates by the Center on Poverty and Social Policy at Columbia University](#).**

Another of our top priorities that passed in the tax bill is simplifying and expanding the Renters' Credit, the state's property tax refund for renters. Starting in 2025, renters will apply for the simplified credit as part of the income tax process, instead of on a separate application.

As a result, an estimated 119,000 more renting households are expected to receive the Renters' Credit – these are folks who already qualify for the credit but face barriers to applying. In addition, many renters will see larger property tax refunds, more renters will qualify for the credit, and renters will receive their refunds earlier in the year.

**In all, this is a \$135 million per year increase in property tax refunds going to Minnesota renters.**

**The tax bill creates a more inclusive tax code by eliminating barriers that have excluded folks who use a federal Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN), rather than a Social Security Number, for tax purposes because of their immigration status.**

ITIN filers will now be able to qualify for the Working Family Credit and homestead status on homes they own. We have long advocated for a fair tax system that sustainably funds public services. Part of that work has been rejecting expensive and unfair proposals for an unlimited Social Security income tax exemption to replace Minnesota's

targeted approach. More than half of the tax cuts from adopting an unlimited exemption would go to the highest-income Minnesotans, and more than \$1 billion each budget cycle would be taken away from resources available to fund public services that Minnesota seniors – as well as their children, grandchildren, and communities – count on.

Ultimately, this year's tax bill built on and simplified the state's targeted approach. Going forward, for example, married folks with adjusted gross incomes (AGI) up to \$100,000 can exempt 100 percent of their Social Security benefits, and can qualify for some exemption until their AGI reaches \$136,000.

**Policymakers also recognized that the majority of the state's projected budget surpluses are temporary, and the tax bill raises additional revenues to sustain public services, including exciting investments and policies enacted this year to address long-standing areas of disparities and disinvestment.**

The 2023 tax bill includes income tax provisions that raise additional revenue from the highest-income Minnesotans, including a surcharge on net investment income above \$1,000,000, and provisions that raise revenues from multinational corporations that shift profits overseas.

These and other components of the 2023 tax bill unleash the power of the tax code to make a brighter future for our state in which truly every Minnesotan, regardless of who they are or where they live, has the opportunity to thrive.

Find more information about this year's tax policy changes on the [Minnesota Budget Project website](#).

# What awaits you in Duluth this fall: MCN's Annual Conference and more

by Courtney Gerber, program director

If you hadn't heard, you're invited to [MCN's 2023 Annual Conference](#) in Duluth, September 20-21!

This year's theme, *Making Waves and Breaking Barriers*, references how water connects us to our physical place and each other, moves continuously, and sustains us. Nonprofits, when doing our best work, are breaking and removing barriers through advocacy and systems change.

And what better place to make waves and break barriers than along the shore of Lake Superior/Gichigami in community with nonprofit leaders from across the state?

Not only will the conference provide you with an opportunity to mingle with hundreds of peers and potential mentors for learning, recharging, agitating, and celebrating, but you'll be in one of the state's stellar spots for leaf peeping, art loving, ship watching, scrumptious dining, and lake-effect marveling.

**Here's what you can look forward to in Duluth:**

## Learn

- Optional pre-conference excursion with Duluth artist Moira Villiard to the [Chief Buffalo Memorial Mural at Gitchi-Ode' Aaing Park](#) (A Grand Heart Place).
- [45 breakout sessions](#) ranging in focus from engaging policymakers, AI in fundraising, creating a fiscally fit board, becoming a trauma-informed leader, disrupting DEI harm, emerging volunteerism strategies, and so much more.

- [Keynote with health equity expert and community-driven research champion Dr. Melissa Walls](#) (memengwaa) and a [live recording of "The Transgenda" podcast](#), a funny, touching, and informative chronicle of Ana, a transgender woman and Cam, her cisgender dad, as they share their experiences of growing together.

## Play

- Social hour with drinks, food, music from Briand Morrison, and prizes. Each attendee receives one free drink (non-alcoholic and alcoholic selection) [thanks to sponsor Bremer Bank!](#)
- Pub crawl (with food stops) hosted by Cam Krueger of "The Transgenda" podcast.
- An unscheduled evening in Duluth. Need we say more?

## Rest

- Qigong sessions with [Seth Currier, Duluth's Damiano Center executive director](#). Seth has trained in Qigong, a gentle mind-body practice, through Spring Forest Qigong in Minneapolis as developed by Master Chunyi Lin.
- Dedicated prayer and quiet space for anyone to use for spiritual needs and nervous system care.
- Beautiful views of Lake Superior in the fall.

[There's still time to register](#). Don't miss two days of learning, playing, and resting with hundreds of your nonprofit peers.

[See you in Duluth!](#)

Don't miss these

### Advocacy Breakout Sessions

September 20 & 21 | Duluth

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#### How & Why to Make Your Advocacy Bipartisan

Nonprofits can help stem the tide of division AND achieve our objectives at the same time. Join this session to learn how doing your advocacy work with a bipartisan lens can set you up for success inside and outside the capitol.

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#### The Impact of Nonprofits

We all need to make waves and break barriers at the Capitol. Learn how your nonprofit can get involved in a 501(c)(3) nonpartisan manner and how joining together with other nonprofits can be a powerful voice for the sector.

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#### Strategies for Engaging Your Policymakers

Join this panel of policymakers to gain confidence in advocating for your nonprofit. Learn how to write letters, testify at the Capitol, and more ways to share your vision for your community with policymakers.

**Secure my spot at #MCNAC23!**

*continued from page 5*

## 2023 Session Impact: Nonprofit wins

MCN was ready to advocate for the sector when this legislation was introduced that would have added barriers to accessing state funding for nonprofits, especially small, rural, and BIPOC-led and –serving nonprofits.

Thank you to our colleagues and partners for sharing insights and feedback to help us create the language that was ultimately adopted!

**A third area of successful advocacy this year is the state’s investment in capital projects (infrastructure) at nonprofits.**

Many nonprofit capital projects around the state received funding in the 2023 capital investment package, totaling over \$200 million, and at least half of those projects are for culturally-specific or BIPOC-led and –serving organizations. MCN supported the capital investment committees to best understand and implement their roles in financial oversight of capital investment funds to nonprofits.

We had good conversations with legislators and other policymakers about how the process of requesting capital investment dollars from the state does not fit nonprofits, since it was created for local units of government. We will continue to look at how the process can be transformed.

**In the meantime, we are pleased to report that the**

**legislature funded a proposal to create capacity at Minnesota Management and Budget to assist nonprofit organizations with understanding the capital investment process.**

MMB will be hiring two staff for these roles, and reached out to MCN asking for our thoughts on the priorities for those staff positions.

**A fourth area MCN has been actively advocating on for years is expanded voting rights. [Read more about those successes on page 11.](#)**

Hopefully reading about all these successes gave you a sense of awe, pride, and excitement too. If your organization wasn’t involved in these successes, let’s talk about how you could be! [MCN’s public policy team is here to help you](#), including resources delivered directly to your inbox.



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# Nonprofit advocacy putting students first is transforming Minnesota’s education system

by John Wurm, membership and communications director

*Each year, nonprofits across Minnesota make incredible contributions to our state’s high quality of life. [The Minnesota Nonprofit Mission Awards](#) were created specifically to honor these contributions. Since 1987, MCN has been showcasing the work of Minnesota’s outstanding nonprofits through the Nonprofit Mission Awards in the categories of Innovation, Anti-Racism Initiative, Advocacy, and Responsive Philanthropy.*

*We are honored to celebrate the [2022 Mission Award recipient for Advocacy](#), EdAllies.*

As a locally led, non-partisan statewide education advocacy nonprofit, [EdAllies](#) takes its name seriously by striving to be strong champions for students and supporting the adults who are working for students’ success. Working in coalition with a diverse range of over 100 partners annually — students, parents, educators, school leaders, other education and advocacy organizations, and other education stakeholders — the BIPOC-led and mission focused organization helps to identify what needs to change for Minnesota students in order to make change happen.

EdAllies is working to transform and reimagine Minnesota’s education system by putting students first, especially historically underserved students. From local communities to the Capitol, the organization is relentless and fearless in its fight for kids, even when the wants of adults and institutions might conflict. Through spearheading policy campaigns, changing the public narrative about what’s needed and what’s possible in education, playing an active role in policy implementation, and ensuring good ideas become best practices, EdAllies drives change to ensure Minnesota’s education system lives up to its promise.

While EdAllies has successfully advanced numerous student-centered policies over time, the nonprofit’s work to overhaul Minnesota’s teacher licensure system, which the *Pioneer Press* called “one of the biggest reforms to state education policy in recent history,” perhaps shines brightest.

After identifying licensure as a barrier for schools and teachers across the state, EdAllies spent years digging into the specifics of how state policy — and its implementation — was driving

low recruitment and retention of teachers of color. For years, Minnesota’s broken teacher licensure system was a barrier for experienced, high-quality, and diverse educators contributing to a teaching corps that is 96 percent white.



*The EdAllies team accepting the 2022 Nonprofit Mission Award for Advocacy.*

In response, EdAllies organized educators and advocates to transform the licensure system, designed policy, and worked with policymakers and researchers to eventually uproot Minnesota’s old licensure system and replace it with a simplified, more equitable one. This systemic shifting policy advocacy effort was years in the making, and students are already benefiting from the results. Today, through advocacy that includes teacher licensure reform and beyond, the diversity of Minnesota’s teacher workforce has increased significantly – a 50 percent increase over the last five years.

In its next phase, EdAllies is focused on advocating for a strong educator pipeline in service of student success by more deeply interrogating how we recruit, prepare, and retain great and diverse teachers, all while protecting the licensure pathways that have been successful at recruiting and retaining the teachers our students need.

As a result of the tireless advocacy of EdAllies and its partners, a pathway towards success is being charted for both Minnesota’s youth and the skilled and dedicated adults tasked with ensuring their short- and long-term success.

The Minnesota Council of Nonprofits was pleased to present the organization with the 2022 Minnesota Nonprofit Mission Award for Advocacy. [Learn more about EdAllies.](#)



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by emailing [info@minnesotanonprofits.org](mailto:info@minnesotanonprofits.org).

September 20 & 21 | Duluth, MN

# 2023 MCN Annual Conference

[www.mcnannualconference.org](http://www.mcnannualconference.org)

- 45 Breakout Sessions with topics across departments
- Live recording of The Transgenda podcast
- Pay What You Can Rates from \$69
- Keynote on Indigenous Health & Partnerships
- Social Hour, Creativity & Wellness Stops, Networking
- And so much more!